

Faiths engage

Monthly Newsletter—Issue 48—August 2023

Welcome to the latest edition of Faiths Engage

In this issue, you can read about our schools and school linking work, which together reach thousands of children and young people each year. There are also insights into faith and community events as well as information about some upcoming courses. I hope you have time for rest over the summer and look forward to seeing you soon.

All the best

Revd Dr Tom Wilson

Education Programme

The 2022 – 2023 academic year has been very busy for schools work. We have engaged with over 5,700 children and adults. The majority of our 'Places of Peace' visits to places of worship have been mainly from outside of Leicester including Leicestershire, Lincoln, Nottingham, Derby and areas where there is very little diversity. In the new academic year, we are hoping to further expand our geographical reach.

Most of our work is with state schools but we are delighted to witness a rise in interest from private schools as well. This widening appeal indicates the relevance and impact of our educational initiatives on promoting interfaith understanding and harmony. Furthermore, we are delighted to share that many of the schools we worked with during the last academic year have already made bookings for the next academic year, signalling their satisfaction with our programs and eagerness to continue their interfaith work.

We would like to thank all our dedicated faith practitioners and places of worship that have ardently supported the educational initiatives of the St. Philip's Centre and without whom we would not be able to offer this service.

Ranby House School - Places of Peace visit to Mosque, Mandir & Synagogue 25th April 2023 Stephen Marsh:

"Thank you to the 'Places of Peace' team for organising an amazing experience for our Year 6 pupils. The moment we stepped off the coach, we realised that it was going to be a day to remember. As we are a Christian-based school, most of our pupils were visiting a Mosque, a Mandir and a Synagogue for the first time. Whatever preparation we covered before the trip does not begin to cover the amount of information shared by the wonderful faith practitioners we met on our journey across the religions. All of the Learning Outcomes were fully covered, at a level that was perfect for our pupils, but we were also reminded that these pale into insignificance when we see faith and religion in action. Each child had a particular memory to share and there were definitely no favourite places of worship, all were spectacular in their own right. The day allowed the children to remember that we are a country made up of many different religions, and that we all have to be respectful and kind to each other. Thank you, and we will be back next year!"



Ranby have already booked their next visit!

Ramila Chauhan

The role of Schools Linking in supporting social integration in Leicester

On July 12th 2023 The All Party Parliamentary Group on Social Integration, (in partnership with British Future's) roundtable and panel discussion event, titled: *'Lessons from Leicester: Bridging Challenges across the UK'*, was held in London at the House of Commons.

This event focused on the present and future of integration and community cohesion policies and practice, and whilst it drew lessons from Leicester, it focused on what can, and should come next and whether policies should be more proactive and preventative as opposed to reactive. It was an opportunity for networking which it is hoped will be the beginning of a platform to share ideas, develop partnerships and think deeply about 'what does and can work' when it comes to the question of integration, community cohesion and bridging those gaps. Although I did not attend in person, the Schools Linking work was showcased by co-director of The Linking Network, Meg Henry and I submitted a written contribution that explained the aims, ethos and potential of this programme for Leicester.

Schools Linking has been delivered by St Philips Centre since 2018 and engages Primary and Secondary schools across Leicester and Leicestershire.

The programme enables teachers to address much of their SMSC requirements as set out by Ofsted, as well as enhance their pupils' racial, religious, and cultural literacy skills. The programme validates individual identities and the 'strength of diversity' is emphasised throughout. Education has the potential to impact wider society and choices made by educators play a vital role in this; Schools Linking has the potential to transform the way we interact as citizens as it can be part of an education that helps

"create in a person, the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions." James Baldwin, *"A Talk to Teachers,"* (1963).

Leicester Schools Linking is part of a national network of 27 local areas, delivering the programme designed by [The Linking Network](#). This work began in 2001 in Bradford, after civil disturbances and racially motivated violence there and has grown year after year.

The Schools Linking programmes support children and young people to investigate the concepts of identity, diversity, community, and justice through four questions: **Who am I? Who are we? Where do we live? How do we all live well together?**

The programme of fully resourced and planned lessons and activities supports schools to develop a positive, cohesive ethos. Made by teachers, for teachers it provides schools with all the training and resources teachers need to confidently plan and facilitate all the provided sessions. Schools Linking is a way for young people to learn about themselves and others in safe and supported spaces. It is through investigating and exploring the four key questions that children recognise the power of diversity and the necessity for justice.

The Linking Network provide a structured framework of training, resources, and support to enable schools to connect their pupils with those from another school in the same region. The pairings are arranged by a locally based facilitator, who considers demographic data ethnicity, faith, cultural heritage, socio-economic background, and urban or rural location. The aim is to connect young people across real or perceived differences, to build relationships with those they would not usually, work together to achieve shared goals and contribute to the wider community. The programme helps build empathy and self-esteem, as well as develop inquiry, critical thinking, reflection, and communication skills.

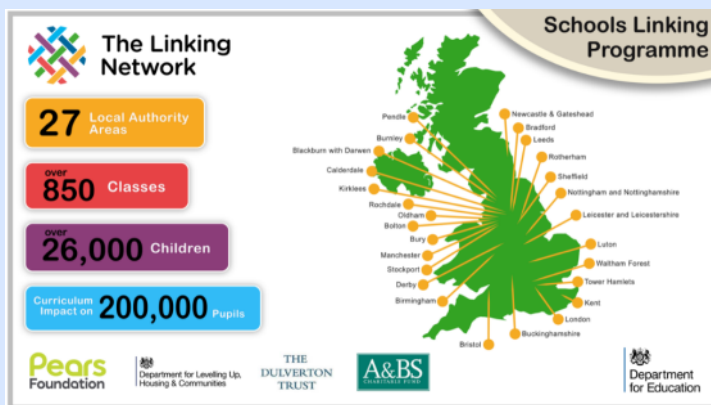
In 2011, The Runnymede Trust, cited schools linking as an example of *good practice in relation to fostering dialogue and building social cohesion amongst school children* and with the recent expansion of TLN's content focusing on social action, belonging, and anti-racism, it is cementing its presence in the area of social and racial justice.

Schools Linking is designed as a **'prejudice reduction tool'** - by investigating identity, connecting communities and building belonging, the programme promotes the need for us all to develop the skills of dialogue, to be able to communicate better across real or perceived boundaries. It's more than just a way to meet people with a different faith, ethnic, cultural or socio-economic background; it goes much further and provides an opportunity for young people to develop a sense of belonging and shared Leicester identity. The programme draws on proven literacy strategies and helps to support children's learning, cognitively, socially, and linguistically. Schools Linking *is rooted in the curriculum*, offering opportunities to address core SMSC themes and curriculum objectives in Art, Citizenship, Computing, Geography, PSHE, RSE and significantly English or Literacy, with Speaking and Listening, Reading and Writing all positively impacted by this work.

At the heart of the Schools Linking programme is the emphasis on building a true sense of 'belonging' for all. Teachers who deliver this work, recognise the transformative potential of Schools Linking on current and future generations and acknowledge the vital role it plays. The identity work at the heart of the Schools Linking process values every child's story and makes every child visible.

If you would like to learn more about the programmes, the research in Social Contact Theory which lies behind Schools Linking or would like to find out how your school can get involved, please get in touch with Ruth Sinhal

school.linking@stphilipscentre.co.uk



Community

Lambeth Palace Visit for Sikh organisations

On Thursday 6th July, I was privileged to join Christian and Sikh leaders for a reception at Lambeth Palace Library hosted by the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby. It was an opportunity for the Archbishop to meet with faith and community leaders from a diverse range of Sikh organisations, to hear their concerns and celebrations, and to talk about areas of common interest. Leicester was well represented with several community leaders attending. Can you spot them all in the photo?



Tom Wilson

Jain community celebrates 50 years in Leicester!

On Sunday 23rd July Riaz and Tom attended a celebration of 50 years of the Jain community in Leicester that was held at the Jain Centre. It was a pleasure to join with them as they marked this important milestone. For small community they contribute a significant amount to the city and are valued partners in our interfaith work. We look forward to a further 50 years of collaboration!



Leicester Synagogue and Heritage Centre Summer Holiday Open Days

The Synagogue and Heritage Centre will be holding special Open Days to keep the whole family entertained this summer. Take part in these fun family-friendly activities, explore the beautiful Synagogue or relax with a book in the comfy reading corner. There is something different to do every Wednesday, so give it a try!

Wednesday 2nd August 13:00—16:00

Tu B'AV festival crafts—learn about this ancient courtship festival and make some art to love.

Wednesday 9th August 13:00—16:00

Challah Bread Baking—learn how to bake the challah bread that is eaten on Shabbat and take home a tasty treat.

Wednesday 16th August 13:00—16:00

Tzedakah Box Painting—learn about the practice of Tzedakah (charity) and paint your own money box so that you can help out too!

Wednesday 23rd August 13:00—16:00

Challah Bread Baking—learn how to bake the challah bread that is eaten on Shabbat and take home a tasty treat.

To book your free place please email Sam Bodily at centremanager@thcong.com



Work with Churches

New Lubbethorpe

James went to visit the Interfaith Group at New Lubbethorpe to help facilitate conversations about how they could host events that are inclusive and appropriate to the needs of people of different faith groups and cultures. If this sort of conversation would be useful to your group please get in touch with James and he'd be very happy to help.

Methodist Conference

James attended the recent Methodist Conference in Birmingham and led a session on 'Hospitality, Service and Proclamation' helping people to think through how we build relationships with those who are different from ourselves. The session led to some interesting conversation with representatives from a number of districts including London, Northampton and Wales. Each representative brought their own insights from their context.

James will be leading a number of webinars on this theme between September and November in conjunction with the Northampton Methodist District- if you'd be interested in learning more about this please email

courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk

Corporate

Our Deputy Director – Riaz Ravat was asked to address members of the Loughborough Council of Faiths on the subject of ‘The Future of Inter Faith’ as part of their 2023 AGM. The event took place at the Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints in Loughborough and included an interactive Q&A session where ideas were exchanged about how to look ahead positively to strengthening relations across our communities. We are grateful to the Loughborough Council of Faiths for their invitation.



Our Cops Communities Consent (CCC) project continued to make plans for the new academic term as Riaz held meetings with Loughborough College, Harington School and The City of Leicester College with view to holding events from the autumn of 2023.



In early July 2023, Riaz was invited to the Muslim School Oadby’s annual prize giving ceremony which marked the achievements of children who study at the institution. A number of guests were present including civic dignitaries. A few days later, Riaz attended a wonderful Eid party held by the Live Arabic school which took place on the grounds of Manor High School in Oadby, Leicestershire. Families whose children attend the educational sessions were in joyous spirits as they marked the Islamic festival of Eid and the end of their study year.



Our Religion & Belief Training for Police Recruits continues and another session was held on 10th July. We are pleased to be able to continue to provide this important training. Thanks to all the faith practitioners who support us in this.



Diary Dates

Christian Engagement in a Multifaith World
Tuesday 19th September 2023,
10am—3pm.

An opportunity to speak with Jewish, Muslim, Hindu and Sikh colleagues to learn how to live well together.

Email courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk to book a place.

“Agency and Education”
Sharing insights from research into spiritual abuse
Tom Wilson
Wednesday 27th September, 11am to 1pm at
St Philip’s Centre

Lunch provided

Sharing findings from Tom’s research into perceptions and experience of spiritual abuse in Christian, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Sikh contexts.

Email courses@stphilipscentre.co.uk to book a place.

Funding Support

Active Together
All Saints’ Educational Trust
Anglican Diocese of Leicester
The Benefact Trust
The Dunhill Medical Trust
Home Office
The J R Corah Foundation Fund
Leicester College
Leicestershire & Rutland Community Foundation
Leicester City Council
The Linking Network

Methodist Connexion
National Lottery Heritage Fund
N C Bellefontaine Trust
Near Neighbours (DLUHC)
Northampton District of the Methodist Church
Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner (OPCC)
Open Society Foundations
P & C Hickinbotham Charitable Trust
Shire Funding
The United Reformed Church



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